

Countryside Books

Kent Boxing Day Walk: Greatstone (3 miles)

Here's a bracing walk by the sea to blow away the winter cobwebs. From this part of the coast at Romney Marsh there are great views over the bay to the white cliffs between Folkestone and Dover and to the shingle promontory at Dungeness in the other direction.

You can walk along the beach, or on shingle and sandy paths. Look out for seabirds and shells, and jellyfish and other marine life swept up onto the beach. You can also see the small-scale steam trains on the Romney, Hythe & Dymchurch railway. The atmospheric landscape of Romney Marsh was used as a location for 'Great Expectations' (2012), with the meeting of Pip and Magwitch filmed at the church in Fairfield.



FAST FACTS

- Terrain: A flat walk on good surfaces, no stiles.
 - Starting point: The pay and display car park at Greatstone-on-Sea (GR 082229, TN28 8ST).
 - How to get there: Greatstone is on the coast road, reached by turning off the A259 at New Romney. Buses (Stagecoach) from Ashford and Folkestone pass the start.
 - Refreshments: Several pubs and cafés are passed on the route, with others available in New Romney.
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THE WALK

1 From the end of the car park nearest the toilets you can walk on a track over sand dunes and turn left to walk along the beach. However, to walk on a firmer surface, or at high tide, turn right from the car park entrance on the pavement alongside the road to pass the toilets.

You could continue along the pavement all the way to Point 2 (1 mile) but for sea views turn right after 700 yards at a footpath fingerpost to go between houses called Sea Wynds and Sea Leap then 50 yards past the end of the gardens turn left on a sandy path.

As you walk, there are views over the bay to the white cliffs at Folkestone and Dover and you can see plants such as sea kale and red valerian on the shingle, and gulls and waders on the beach. Continue ahead through the car park of a watersports club and past a lifeboat station then through a large car park behind houses and the Seahorse pub.

At the end of the car park turn left towards the road then right past a white metal barrier on a shingle path which runs between beach huts and a grassy area with a playground. Continue on the path or on the grass until you reach wooden shelters near an information board for the Romney shore and a tall Victorian drinking fountain.

2 Turn left here to go inland on the pavement alongside Littlestone Road, signed as the B2071 to New Romney and Dymchurch. Continue for $\frac{3}{4}$ mile alongside the tree-lined road until you reach a station for the Romney, Hythe & Dymchurch railway.

Opposite the station turn left, immediately past the Captain Howey Hotel, along Station Approach by the railway. Continue ahead as the road becomes a concrete track and, where this bends left to a sewage works, go straight on for 100 yards on a grassy track to a horse paddock. Turn right alongside the fence to cross the railway via gaps next to gates.

3 Go ahead for 10 yards then turn left at a mileage post to go on an earth track between hedges. Follow the track when it bends left after 200 yards, rather than going straight on.

There is a view ahead to Dungeness power station in the distance. The track recrosses the railway then you follow it as it bends through bushes. Ignore any side paths and continue until you reach a concrete road. Follow this road between houses for $\frac{3}{4}$ mile to reach a main road by shops, with the car park opposite.

WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR

The Romney, Hythe & Dymchurch Railway was built in 1927 and runs for 13½ miles across the flat expanse of Romney Marsh from Hythe to Dungeness. It uses steam engines and carriages that are one third full size. The headquarters of the railway are at New Romney station, passed on the walk, and here there are engine sheds, a large model railway, buffet, gift shop and children's playground, as well as a 1940s museum (the museum is open April to September).

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